

A Chat with a Man From the CIA

By MARIJEAN PUDENZ

Not all members of the Central Intelligence Agency resemble James Bond in appearance, equipment, or in his forbidding aura of secrecy.

Dr. Leo W. Sweeney, who visited Iowa State last month, looks like he might be a professor, carries a relatively innocent-looking briefcase, and works for the Economic Research unit of the CIA. This unit is concerned with researching, analyzing, and reporting on foreign economies, with, Dr. Sweeney pointed out, predominant interest in the economies of Communist countries.

Concerning the economic structure of Russia, Sweeney said that while there is a long-range trend toward free enterprise, no substantial departure has yet been made. Sweeney said the area showing the most definite trend toward free enterprise is that of consumer goods, excluding food production. He explained that in an area like clothing manufacturing, the government can grant a degree of freedom, observe how the competitive method is operating, and still not lose control over the industry.

Can't Modify Agriculture

It is hard for the government to modify the agricultural set-up as it can industry, he said, because this would involve too much exposure of the control they feel is necessary. This lack of control and the concept of free enterprise in farming would be so opposed to basic Communist ideology that Sweeney said it is exceedingly doubtful that free enterprise will ever be adopted in Russian agriculture.

There is a small degree of free enterprise permitted, as the worker on the collective farm does have some land and livestock allotted to him for private use. The produce raised on a private plot can then be sold competitively in the market. These small private plots are very well tended, Sweeney said.

Cuban Economy

Cuba also utilizes the state farm as its basic agricultural unit. There is more private ownership of land in Cuba than in the USSR, Sweeney said, but this land is heavily taxed and oppressed in other ways to discourage private ownership. Although unskilled people may be better off under Castro, the Cuban economy as a whole is in worse straits than under Batista, he said. He cited the large manpower shortage in agriculture as an example. However, he said he didn't think Castro felt he was risking much in his new "open-door" policy. "The people that Castro is permitting to leave," Sweeney theorized, "are probably people whom Castro regards as contributing little anyway."

Wants Researchers

Sweeney, a former professor of economics at the University of Iowa, was on campus Nov. 15-17 interviewing prospective employees for the Economic Research unit. These research analysts are allowed to publish research work done on their own time and not containing classified information, he said. Rather than 007-types, he said, his department is interested in graduate students, people who are specialists in certain areas, and who can handle research material.